

**Town of *Dunstable* Selectboard**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**February 22, 2022**  
**Town Hall, Dunstable, MA 01827**

**Convened:** 5:04 pm

**Present:** Leah D. Basbanes, chair, Kieran D. Meehan, vice chair, Ronald J. Mikol, member(s); Brian M. Palaia, Town Administrator; Darrell Gilmore, Sergeant of Police; Erik Hoar, Sergeant of Police; Nicholas Papageorgiou, Sergeant of Police; Harold Simmons, Advisory Board; Mike Martin, Roads Commission; Mark Cullen, Highway Dept.; Joan Simmons, Planning Board; Scott Butcher

**Call to Order**

Ms. Basbanes called the meeting to order. She then went over the agenda which includes discussion with the towns Police Sergeants and possible appointment of an Acting Chief of Police, and Interviews with potential Interim Town Administrator Candidates. She then reminded those present that this meeting will not be broadcasted and is a special session for interviews. Therefore she requested the audience refrain from recording the meeting so as not to allow any future candidates to have any unfair advantage from knowing questions before hand. There will also be no public forum at this meeting.

**Discussion with, & Possible Appointment Thereafter of, one of the Sergeants of Police as Acting Chief of Police**

The Board suggested that only one Sergeant be present at a time for questioning. Mr. Palaia generally agreed with that. This can't be done in Executive Session and candidates can't be forced to leave, but in fairness it was asked that they do so. All the Sergeants agreed that would be fair.

➤ *Sergeant Gilmore*

The Board began by asking a series of questions. Sgt. Gilmore then briefly outlined his 25 years with the town. He emphasized his experience in the public sector including his work with successive Police Chiefs and his service in other public offices such as being a Selectman in Pepperell. He understands this would likely be only a matter of weeks. The Board then asked specifically about accreditation. Sgt. Gilmore outlined how the department obtained its accreditation during Chief Downes's tenure and how it was maintained by Chief Dow. The Board then noted the high profile nature of the job at times, particularly during times of community tragedy. The Chief often is the spokesperson for the town in such situations in conjunction with the Town Administrator and the Board. Sgt. Gilmore outlined his experience and his ability to perform in that role. To him discretion is the most important factor and often a Chief is limited in what they can say based on the facts and circumstances. The second most important is knowing the facts. The Board then turned to the modern challenges for police including reforms recently passed by the General Court. Sgt. Gilmore outlined his understanding of the recent reforms as well as changes in training. He predicted that Massachusetts will hew to a path similar to New Hampshire which licenses its officers and has a revocation process or decertification process. Regardless, while recruitment might pose challenging for a while, a good Chief will help his department get through it. The Board then asked what the temporary nature of the job means to Sgt. Gilmore. The Sergeant responded that whether it be a few weeks or couple months, the most important aspect will be that we are in the thick of next year's budget and the buildup to Annual Town Meeting. Obviously there is also keeping morale up and maintaining the department. Another consideration will be the incoming Interim Town Administrator and working with them and the Advisory Board. The Board asked about internal matters like complaints and public relations. Sgt. Gilmore outlined the present policies and procedures and how that would be handled. The Board probed how the Sergeant would be consistent and fair in relation to a number of matters. Sgt. Gilmore outlined his philosophy for leadership and how to counsel and assist officers. The Board asked if the Sergeant had ever disciplined other officers. Sgt. Gilmore gave a few examples and noted we're all human. The Board then asked what his greatest achievement was in his opinion. Sgt. Gilmore responded working with Seniors. He was also proud of his past service as a Union officer. He finished by emphasizing the need for all parties to work together.

➤ *Sergeant Hoar*

The Board again began by asking a series of questions including some background. Sgt. Hoar started by thanking the Board for the opportunity and noting he's served for over 20 years. Prior to his police service he was a volunteer firefighter. He then briefly outlined his responsibilities as a Sergeant. The Board then asked about accreditation. Sgt. Hoar gave a brief history on the town's process and his own increasing involvement since the tenure of Chief Dow. When he was Lieutenant, Chief Dow was primarily responsible for accreditation. After becoming Chief he asked someone to step up and Sgt. Hoar explained he was proud to do so. He plugged the idea of a further accreditation status the department could obtain noting that Chief Dow had planned to get there. He noted there are 169 standards to be certified and another 80 or so for further accreditation. Much of it

*Approved and adopted on 3/16/22*

requires proof of training over multiple years as well as implementation of policies. The Board then noted the high profile nature of the job at times. The Chief often is the spokesperson for the town in many situations. Sgt. Hoar noted he's never really been in that situation, but he felt that while he's not one for public speaking he would be able to do it. He emphasized the services available to Chiefs to help them and the need for discretion. He further noted that the public relations official for Police is almost always the Chief. The Board then turned to modern policing challenges and the recent reforms. Sgt. Hoar noted that Dunstable has been very fortunate. No instances of excessive force have come out. When it comes to the reforms, he has been highly involved. Still he felt the reforms won't overly impact the department just given the nature of it. Still it could cause financial burdens for the town as mandated changes are made. The Board noted this is temporary and asked the Sergeant how he would approach it. Sgt. Hoar stressed he hopes to see Chief Dow return as soon as possible. In the meantime he felt it important that there be continuity of leadership. He would not seek to implement many changes. He also has spent a lot of time working closely with Chief Dow and felt comfortable with maintaining the status quo. His main concern was with submitting a budget for FY23. But was confident from what he knows that Chief Dow has one prepared already. The Board asked the Sergeant about standards and provided a few hypotheticals which he answered. Sgt. Hoar stressed what is and is not acceptable. The Board then asked the Sergeant whether he has had to discipline any officers. Sgt. Hoar noted the Chief is truly the authority to hand out discipline, but he has run into situations where he's had to counsel fellow officers about their actions. The Board then asked about what he was proud of during his time. Sgt. Hoar responded that the accreditation is one of his biggest, but noted a few other things including retrieving stolen property and solving a multi-decade cold case. The Board finished by asking why him. Sgt. Hoar briefly elaborated on his skills and the respect he commands in the department. He felt that he would be able to carry out the duties successfully. Fair and consistent leadership is key and not showing favoritism.

➤ *Sergeant Papageorgiou*

The Board again began by asking a series of questions. Sgt. Papageorgiou noted he's been with the town for over 18 years and trains all officers. He is very proud of the department's accomplishments and the new era of policing that has come as a result of the recent reforms. He reminded that he has the most training as an officer outlining multiple specialties that he maintains such as being a negotiator. The Board picked up on the reforms noting the accreditation. They asked how involved he is in that process. Sgt. Papageorgiou briefly outlined his role. He in particular educates new officers on policies and procedures. He then outlined audits like the one CJIS does, noting he's in charge of those. They look at everything and make sure it's in order. The Board then noted the high profile nature of the job at times and the role the Chief plays. Sgt. Papageorgiou emphasized the main thing about communication is ensuring facts. Another thing is to utilize resources available to Police Chiefs. The Board then returned to the reforms and the challenges faced by modern policing. Sgt. Papageorgiou went over the reforms and detailed how it would impact Dunstable. The Board turned to handling things like budget and town meeting asking about the Sergeants comfort level. Sgt. Papageorgiou noted he's the crisis negotiator, so he doesn't sweat under pressure. He can't anticipate every question, but he'll be honest. He felt he would be comfortable. The Board asked about the temporary nature of this role and what that would mean. Sgt. Papageorgiou outlined how he would start and the process he would implement for assessing things. Particularly the budget. The Board then provided a few hypotheticals and asked how the Sergeant would respond. Sgt. Papageorgiou briefly answered providing examples of how he would respond including emphasizing the resources that would be at his disposal. The Board returned to budget asking if the Sergeant has had a hand in previous budgets. Sgt. Papageorgiou emphasized his knowledge of the FY22 budget and his role in helping Chief Dow shape the FY23 budget to date. The Board then asked of any situations of enforcing discipline. Sgt. Papageorgiou outlined a few instances where he's had to and the approach he uses. He emphasized a conciliatory approach, but one that is still fair. The Board then asked him what accomplishments he's most proud of. Sgt. Papageorgiou responded that training his fellow officers is his proudest. Seeing them succeed and hearing positive feedback from the public makes him proud. The Board finished by asking why this appointment. Sgt. Papageorgiou elaborated on his reasons. Mostly the challenges of a global approach and the reward of public service.

The Board asked Mr. Palaia if a decision needs to be made at this meeting. He responded that it isn't necessary, Sergeant Gilmore as most senior can remain in charge for the time being. Still, he reminded the Board that its next meeting has a little bit of a schedule issue given the meeting it's been requested to attend with the GDRSD School Committee and its Groton counterparts. The Board asked if an Acting Chief has to be compensated. Mr. Palaia responded they should be. Probably 5-10 percent more than they make now. So maybe another \$5,000 to \$10,000. The Board asked about backfilling the void that would be made by temporarily elevating one of the Sergeants. Mr. Palaia responded that it would likely prompt overtime costs, but the department does have a budget for overtime. The Board asked about the Union issues that might arise. Mr. Palaia responded it could be uncomfortable with them, but they would have to temporarily suspend their role in the Union. Still there is no legal prohibition. The Board noted there's a lot of uncertainty. The general feeling was that a decision needs to be made sooner rather than later. Approachability was important to the Board. As was charisma. The main thrust was that all three are qualified. Still, the Board felt that two of the candidates were strong. Mainly Sgt. Papageorgiou and Sgt. Hoar. The Board concluded by determining in favor of Sgt. Hoar for a period not to exceed 45 days with a review after for further determination. The Board then informed the Sergeants of their choice and thanked them all for their willingness to serve.

A motion was made by Mr. Mikol to appoint Sgt. Hoar as the Acting Chief of Police for a period of 45 days with review and final determination thereafter. The motion was seconded by Mr. Meehan and passed unanimously.

### **Interview(s) in Person for Interim Town Administrator**

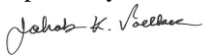
The interview with Interim Town Administrator candidate Mr. Scott Butcher began at 6:40 pm. Mr. Butcher introduced himself and provided an overview of his past experience and credentials as a Town Administrator in several different towns New Hampshire. He stated that he has been on Selectboard as well as and other municipal boards in Massachusetts and that he has extensive corporate experience. The Board asked Mr. Butcher several questions about his past experiences with town meetings, budget building, Charters, contract negotiations, etc. and his approaches to different scenarios that one may encounter in a municipal setting. Mr. Butcher ended with a question of what the Boards expectations are regarding the length of the interim position; the Board anticipated that the term may be until Dec 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022 with review at that time. No motions were made and the interview concluded at 7:20 pm. It was decided to interview another candidate in person on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022.

### **Meeting on Zoom for Further Interviews & Possible Subsequent Decision**

The Board had reservations about conducting this interview virtually. Mr. Palaia elaborated on why the candidate in question asked for a virtual interview. If the Board is not interested he noted he could simply inform the candidate. The Board generally wished to interview the candidate. The Board then asked Mr. Palaia about the timeline for hiring an Interim Town Administrator. Mr. Palaia outlined when the job posting closes and reminded he will depart on March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022. The Board suggested rescheduling that the candidate expected for the Zoom session would be asked to appear in person on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022, instead.

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Mikol at 7:45 pm. The motion was seconded by Mr. Meehan and passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by



Jakob K. Voelker, Assistant Town Administrator